

SPEECH

OF

HON. WM. D. KELLEY, OF PA.,

ON

FREEDMEN'S AFFAIRS.

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEB. 23, 1864.

The House having under consideration the bill to establish a Bureau of Freedmen's Affairs, Mr. KELLEY said:

Mr. SPEAKER: Mutation is the law of our life. Paradoxical as it may seem, no law is more immutable or inexorable than this. "Passing away" is written on all material things. Nothing bideth in one stay; and sir, much of pain and anguish as these ever recurring changes, the inevitable product of swift-winged time, may bring, they are the sole source of hope and aspiration; they are the method and sure guarantee of progress, social and political. Stagnation is death. Bats and owls undoubtedly have their place in the economy of nature, but in their love of the twilight and darkness that succeed the day they do not symbolize the wise and sagacious statesman. That nation is in a bad way whose legislators' intellectual vision is from the back of their heads; whose faith ignores eternal laws because they are invisible, and lays hold only of such palpable facts as that pepper is hot in the mouth, and that when the sun is at meridian it should be noon by the almanac; and whose hope sings no joyful prophecy of a better future, but spends itself on a sad refrain made up of legend and tradition. The wise statesman—indeed, he who is at all a statesman is keen and far-sighted—notes the ever-recurring new facts of the new day. He watches the progress of sentiment and opinion. He observes the development of the material resources of his country and of the world. He pays regard to the eternal laws of justice, right, and truth, and from time to time so modifies those habits, customs, and institutions as are vicious or essentially temporary and transitory as to bring the order of society into harmony with nature's laws, and secure the prosperity and peace of the people.

Sir, statesmanship would have averted the rebellion that now scourges our country. The fathers of the country saw the character of slavery. They gave us the Ordinance of 1787, which forever prohibited it north and west of the Ohio river. They excluded from our Constitution the words "slave" and "slavery," because they believed the institution to be transitory, and would not cause the blush of shame to mantle the cheeks of their descendants by recording in that enduring instrument the fact that an institution so incompatible with its scope and spirit had ever existed under it. Had their counsels prevailed, or had statesmen succeeded them in the government of the country, slavery would have long since been abolished, and other questions than those which now distract our country would have been in process of solution at the hands of a peaceful, prosperous, and mighty people. But it was not so ordered. The Government was confided to the hands of wicked and short-sighted demagogues, who, by disregarding the immutable laws of right and justice, have involved us in war; and it is the part of the wise statesman and legislator to accept facts as he finds them, to apply controlling and enduring principles, and thus evoke beautiful order out of the sanguinary chaos that surrounds us. This he may do by inaugurating a system of paid labor that shall be in harmony with the spirit of the age and Christian civilization.

The bill under consideration, Mr. Speaker, is well calculated to produce these happy results. The committee charged with its preparation has considered it in no narrow or partisan spirit. The majority of the committee beheld the great need of such a bureau as it contemplates. They have called from far and near the wisest

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counselors. They have heard slaveowning and other citizens of the rebellious territory. They have called to their aid officers both civil and military who had enjoyed the means of ascertaining what is needed, and after mature deliberation they have reported the bill as it stands before the House. Its immediate passage is demanded by the fact that the ancient order of things has been destroyed over a territory described by the eloquent gentleman from New York [Mr. Brooks] as "larger than were the whole thirteen original States of these United States; a territory extending from the shores of the Potomac to the Rio Grande." The constitutions of the States that once had jurisdiction over that vast territory were extinguished when sovereign conventions of the people severed the ligaments that bound them to the Constitution and Government of the United States. Their able-bodied white men have been or are being conscripted by the despotic and aristocratic usurpers of their government to make war upon us and our institutions. Their slaves, freed by the proclamation of the Commander-in-Chief of our Army and Navy, are fleeing by tens and hundreds of thousands to our standard and within our lines, and the broad territory to which we look for supplies of cotton, rice, sugar, and tobacco lies a wide waste, overgrown with weeds. The bill proposes, by means simple, legal, constitutional, and inexpensive, nay, by which millions, many millions, per annum will be added to the Treasury of our country, to cultivate so much of these lands, and to employ in their cultivation so many of these people as have come or may come within our lines. In the cultivation of its lands a nation finds its wealth. And none can suffer from the employment of idle laborers on abandoned lands.

The future welfare of the freedmen demands such action. They must not be permitted to contract habits of idleness, indolence, and vagrancy. The welfare of the people of the North demands it. They need the commodities yielded by this territory. Their industry is paralyzed by the want of cotton which will be produced by the labor of these people. The world at large demands it. The absence of the well-directed toil of these very people upon the neglected lands now and soon to be within our lines has caused gaunt want and starvation to stalk through the manufacturing districts of Great Britain and the continent. And it is our duty, by prompt legislation, to stanch these wounds, as we can do by the coming autumn. The provisions of this bill are well directed to that end. Humanity, the spirit of the nineteenth century, and Christian civilization demand its immediate passage.

Happily, I need not dwell on its details. They were elaborately explained by my colleague on the committee when he introduced the bill to the House. On that occasion he challenged the free, frank, and full discussion of the bill; and what response has been made to his challenge? The gentleman from Ohio, [Mr. Cox,] the gentleman from the Brooklyn district of New York, [Mr. KALBFLEISCH,] and the gentleman from the city district of that State, [Mr. Brooks,] have all spoken to the bill; but they have not discussed its details. They have not attempted to point out the provisions in it that are unconstitutional, illegal, or unwise. They have heaped upon it invective and denunciation; but its details and its spirit they have evaded. Indeed, the gentleman from New York [Mr. Brooks] said:

"But, Mr. Speaker, it is vain for me to attempt to discuss the details of this bill, for it is a bill which has doubtless been caused and settled and decided upon elsewhere. I will not, therefore, waste the time of the House in a futile discussion of its details."

Futile, indeed, would have been the discussion had the gentleman attempted to verify his denunciation of the bill by pointing out the provisions which sustain or justify it. He chose rather to evade the bill, its objects, and its provisions, and to entertain us with incoherent rhapsodies, which would have been very well in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union where we speak for buncombe, but which sounded dreary and melancholy enough in connection with a grave topic like that which should properly have engaged the attention of the House.

Sir, in the absence of assailable provisions in the bill, the gentleman poured forth his indignation upon the grand old Puritan State. He said:

"I know the spirit of Massachusetts. I know her inexorable, unappeasable, demonic energy. I know that what she decrees she will execute, as when she ordered the burning of the witches at Salem, or the scourging of the Quakers, or the exile of the Baptists to the rocky shores of the Narragansett or to the mountain fastnesses and glens of New Hampshire, where my maternal Baptist ancestors were banished. Hence when, as now, she decrees on the African, I tremble for three million of hitherto happy human beings now doomed to extermination."

And again he said:

"The spirit of Massachusetts has done in two or three years only what Christ, or the church of Christ, was twelve or fifteen hundred years in accomplishing in the Roman empire."

Sir, I am no son of Massachusetts or New England as the gentleman is; but I remember that, in my wayward youth, being free from the indenture that had bound me to a long apprenticeship, but not having attained manhood, I wandered from my native Pennsylvania, counter to the current tide of emigration, in pursuit of employment, and found a home in Massachusetts, and I may be pardoned if I pause a moment to feebly testify my gratitude to her in whom I found a gentle and generous foster-mother. I thank God for the Puritan spirit of Massachusetts. A boy, poor, friendless, and in pursuit of wages for manual toil, I found open to me in the libraries of Boston the science, history, and literature of the world. At a cost that even the laboring man did not feel I found in her lyceums and lecture-rooms the means of easy intercourse with her Bancrofts, her Brownsons, her Everetts, her Channings, her Prescotts, her Emersons, and scores of other as learned and as able, though perhaps less distinguished sons than these. I thus learned what it was to be an American citizen, and to what a height American civilization will be carried; and found four years of life spent at well-paid toil worth to me what the same number of years in a college might have been. I thank the men of Massachusetts, as will the scholars in public schools fashioned upon her principles in the city of Charleston in good time. They may be white, they may be black, they may be yellow, but when the civilization of Massachusetts shall have penetrated that dark city, and fashioned its institutions as it will, the pleasure of the pupils in the schools will be to thank God night and morning for the spirit of Massachusetts which kept liberty alive, and finally brought its blessings to the entire people of the country. Yes, sir, Massachusetts in the past three years has given a practical application to those principles which in twelve or fifteen centuries gave freedom to Europe, and are about giving it to all the people of America. Not without war, however; and the gentleman ignored the teachings of history when he said that it had been done without war in Europe. Sir, the history of the contest for freedom in Europe is a history of continuous, sanguinary, and destructive war.

The gentleman from Ohio [Mr. Cox] less gravely—I will not say more flippantly, for that might be offensive—devoted his hour, as I have said, not to the examination of the bill, but to a criticism of certain utterances of Wendell Phillips and Theodore Tilton, and reading copious extracts from a pamphlet recently published by Dexter, Hamilton & Co., Nassau street, New York, entitled *Miscegenation*.

I am a little disappointed, Mr. Speaker, that this bill should receive such treatment at the hands of gentlemen on the other side of the House. They profess to sympathize with the people of the South and wish to restore them to the blessings of society. Sir, do they not know that this bill relates to four million people of the South, half a million, certainly more than four hundred thousand, of whom are the near relatives of their former associates on this floor and their partisans in the South, men to whom they and their deluded followers confided the administration of our Government for more than thirty years? None know better than these gentlemen that one half million slaves are the near relatives, the uncles, aunts, and cousins, brothers, sisters, and children of the Democracy of the South; that in the veins of that number of colored people tingles the blood of what the gentlemen have been pleased to consider the *master race* of this country. The gentleman intimated that, he believed that the Republicans and abolitionists of the North will fall into the practice of amalgamation. Sir, he knows very well that the complaint of the alleged illegal and unconstitutional arrest of that specimen of southern chivalry, the representative of Virginia manners and morals, that leader of the New York Democracy, Captain J. U. Andrews, is not the real grievance in the premises. He knows very well that their real grievance, and that out of which they expected to make most capital while they hoped to restore slavery to its old political power, is that when the officers tore that husband of a white wife ruthlessly from the sweltering embrace of his African *inamorata* they violated Democratic usages. Yes, sir; this is their real cause of complaint in the premises.

It is not the men of the North who have been enamored by that complexion which is described as the "shadowed livery of the burning sun." It is not the men of the North who have laid their "snowy hands" in "palms of russet;" or "hung Europe's priceless pearl that shames the Orient on Africa's swarthy neck;" or realized experimentally the truth of the poet's aphorism, that

"In joining contrasts lieth Love's delight."

These exquisite and delicate sources of enjoyment have been in the exclusive possession of the southern Democracy, the collaborators in politics of the gentleman

who charges them so wantonly upon the people of his own section. He has never seen the white northern man choose his companion from that race. I have by me the picture of a band of slaves sent north by General Banks, four of whom are as white as we who hold this discussion. They come from the colored schools recently established in New Orleans. They are children of southern Democrats; born in Virginia and Louisiana, they were owned or sold by their fathers as negro slaves. I look, sir, upon that picture of Washington's companion in the Revolution [pointing to the picture of La Fayette] and his fit associate in this Hall, and I remember that when on his tour through this country in 1824 he visited the southern States, he very publicly expressed his surprise at finding the complexion of the negro population in the cities so largely changed from what it had been at the close of the revolutionary war.

But a few weeks ago, in conversation with a distinguished son of Kentucky, himself a slaveholder, upon the question now under discussion, he said to me that in 1849 he was at school at Danville, Kentucky; that there were there on an average three hundred young men, and that though the colored population of the town numbered, six hundred, there were but six of pure African blood. The students at that school were not northern abolitionists or Republicans. They were the wealthy and educated young gentlemen of the democratic South.

But, sir, let this question not rest upon isolated instances or narrow localities. Let us look at the census of 1860. I find by it that more than half a million of the colored people of that section are, as I have already said, the kindred of the white race of the South. Thus in Louisiana, of the free colored people, 81.29 per cent. are of mixed blood, while in Pennsylvania only 36.67 are of mixed blood. And here let me say the latter are nearly all of southern birth. I remember that while litigation was pending in our courts between two colored natives of Charleston there were on one occasion about fifty witnesses in court. Some of my colleagues remember the occasion. The contest was between Robert J. Douglass and Wilkinson Jones, and among the fifty witnesses, all of whom were natives of Charleston, South Carolina, and its immediate vicinity, there was not a black or a white man. They were all of mixed blood. And in behalf of Pennsylvania, I claim that the South has sent us by far the greater portion of what we have of that stock. In Alabama the percentage of mixed blood is 77.99, and in Vermont 27.08. In Texas it swells to 76.90; in Rhode Island it sinks to 25.23; in South Carolina it rises again to 71.96, notwithstanding her exportations to Pennsylvania and elsewhere; in Connecticut it sinks to 22.04. In North Carolina it is 71.59; in New York it is 15.88. In Florida it is 68.99; in New Jersey it is but 13.64. But these, you say are freed people; these are persons whose fathers, unwilling to sell their own blood, have manumitted their children. Let us look, then, to the statistics of the slave population. I find that by the census of 1850 there were of mixed blood among the slave population but 7.30 per cent.; and in 1860, so busy had the pro-slavery Democracy been in augmenting the numerical power of the institution, that the 7.30 had swollen to 10.41; and if the negro race is to be saved as a distinct one, the only way to do it is to take it from the embrace of the slaveholders, acknowledge the humanity of the slave, give him the rite of marriage, and teach him those great truths which, according to the gentlemen from New York, in twelve or fifteen hundred years gave freedom and morals to Europe.

But enough and something too much of this. Indeed, I crave pardon of the House for having followed the gentlemen from Ohio so far in this discussion.

It is not for me, Mr. Speaker, to predict the fate of races of people. It is not for me to disclose the providence of God with reference to our country. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." My business, and yours, sir, and that of this House, is to legislate wisely for the remedy of the evils that now beset our country. The country, the world, humanity at large needs the labor of these freedmen upon the broad lands abandoned by rebel owners, and I beg the House to pass this bill as the sure means of securing present blessings and future peace and national prosperity.

The gentleman from New York [Mr. Brook's] said further:

"I must accept facts accomplished, and abide by the consequences. Hence I recognize the abolition of slavery; hence I intend to act hereafter upon that recognition, because it is inevitable. So far as I have influence I intend to withdraw that question from the exciting canvass of the day, and to go before the people upon other matters of difference."

Sir, I hail the gentleman as friend and brother in the good work of the future. I welcome him as I hope soon to welcome to the ranks of the friends of freedom the gentleman from Ohio, [Mr. Cox,] who told us that the Democratic party had not been a pro-slavery party, and seemed to me to be paving the way for com-

ing forward and joining those who bear the standard of progress. Yes, I shall welcome him too, addicted as he is to persiflage.

But the gentleman from New York says that slavery is dead. Let us give it decent burial. Let us erect to its wicked memory a monument. Let us close the mouth of the sepulchre with a stone so weighty that it shall preclude the possibility of resurrection. Let us put over it the Constitution of the United States, having first written therein that slavery or involuntary servitude, except as punishment for crime, shall be forever prohibited within the United States, or any State thereof, or any Territory belonging thereto. When we shall have done that, slavery will be dead indeed, and the United States be freedom's harbinger to mankind, offering perpetual welcome to the oppressed of the world. Will gentlemen give us a vote for that amendment, and thus attest the sincerity of their conversion?

But something more is to be done. Slavery is not quite dead. It holds a little fastness still in Kentucky, where slaves are gathered from all the surrounding States; but it is in the act of death. We may consider it dead, and pass on to the next duty. Having eradicated chattel slavery, let us unite in securing freedom to the people who have been its victims. Are they capable of freedom? Are they worthy of our efforts? Let Messrs. Owen, McKaye, and Dr. Howe speak. They have had ample means of judging, and have carefully passed upon these questions. In their report of the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission they say:

"The evidence before the commission establishes, beyond a cavil, the fact that these refugees are, with rare exceptions, loyal men, putting faith in the Government, looking to it for guidance and protection, willing to work for moderate wages if promptly paid, docile and easily managed, not given to quarreling among themselves, of temperate habits, cheerful and uncomplaining under hard labor, whenever they are treated with justice and common humanity, (in the southern climate) able and willing, on the average, to work as long and as hard as white laborers, whether foreign or native born."

Certainly such people are capable of taking care of themselves. Let us then give them freedom, indeed. We have struck the shackles from their limbs, but they are like orphan children. They need such guidance and assistance at the hands of the Government as a faithful guardian would bestow. They have not owned themselves. Marriage has been a rite denied them. They were not permitted to identify themselves or their children by the use of family names. History, science, and literature have been sealed books to them; nay, it has been a felony to teach them to read the word of God! They, their wives and children, have been numbered, counted, bought, and sold, with horses, cows, and other cattle on the plantations of their owners. This can be no more. They are sober, industrious, and skilled in the labor which is required to make these broad acres productive, and all that they need is guidance, fair play in the battle of life, and fair wages for fair day's work. Let us, then, by the provisions of this bill, secure these blessings to them, and they will prove their fitness for liberty.

But the gentleman [Mr. Brooks] says they will be destroyed; that a harsh and superior race will exterminate them; that liberty is no boon to them. In this he asserts the theory of the despot and the aristocrat of every age and country. No man is, in their judgment, fit for freedom till he has got used to its enjoyment. I tell you, sir, that liberty is not a superstition, a name, an uncertain tradition. It is a fact. It is well embodied in our political institutions, and is confirmed by the equal social and political life of New England. Freedom, sir, is for the laborer

"Bread
And a comely table spread,
When from daily labor come,
In a neat and happy home.
It is clothes and fire and food
For the trampled multitude."

Let us pass this bill. Let the commissioners it calls into being see that abandoned estates are leased. Let the freedmen feel that he is a man with a home to call his own, and a family around him, a wife to protect, children to nurture and rear, wages to be earned and received, and a right to invest his savings in the land of the country, and you will find that no race will prove itself able to blot out of existence these hardy children of toil. According to the gentleman's theory, the Irish race is rapidly disappearing from the world. Look at the census and behold its frightful exhibit. In 1841 the population of Ireland was 8,175,124. In 1861, after a lapse of but twenty years, it had shrunk to 5,764,543. Is the Irish element therefore disappearing? Sir, it is making an empire of Australia. It is taking advantage of our ridiculously misnamed reciprocity treaty with Canada, and building up a rival power beyond the lakes. The names of Corcoran, Mulli-

gan, and Meagher tell you what it is doing in our midst. Although the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. HARRINGTON] would exclude the Celt from the right of citizenship and confine it to the Anglo-Saxon alone, the day never was when the Irish element of humanity was exercising so wide, so powerful, so beneficent an influence as it does to-day, when the little island of Ireland is apparently being depopulated. You need not fear that this black race will fade away. Give these people homes, the sense of proprietorship in the land, families to cherish, the pleasures and power of science, literature, philosophy, and the hopes of religion, and you need not fear that you can corrupt them as you have done in slavery or annihilate them by your power. The glowing South, the land of the tropics, genial to them, invites its own development and will insure that of this race.

The people of the South understand this matter better than we. I find in the *New Orleans Times*, of December 16, the proceedings of the convention of the friends of freedom in the State of Louisiana. It was largely attended by the ablest and best men of New Orleans and the contiguous parishes. Thomas J. Durant, Esq., who for thirty years has illustrated the glorious profession of law at the bar of Louisiana, presided, and, on taking the chair, said:

"Fellow-citizens of the convention, friends of the cause of human freedom and of liberty, I feel greatly oppressed by the sentiments which crowd upon me with overpowering influence, as I thank you, before taking my seat in the honorable position to which your voices have assigned me, for the honor you have conferred on me. You are assembled in a great and sacred cause. It is the cause for which your forefathers fought; the cause for which your brothers, on many a battle-field, are falling and dying. It is the sacred cause of liberty. We are prompted to the execution of the task which we have undertaken by every sentiment of justice and humanity; of justice to ourselves as men representing the great principles of freedom in the State of Louisiana, and to those wearing the bonds of slavery, but whose bonds are now to be broken. This convention is the first deliberative body in Louisiana that will have proclaimed the freedom of all men. No matter with how dark a hue their skins may be embrowned, beneath the surface there is the soul of a man, and therein we recognize the great principle of equality and fraternity. It is the assertion of this principle which will lead to the reconstruction of our country. It is by the destruction of slavery that, phoenix-like, will rise from the ashes of this rebellion the spirit of a new freedom. Out of this *insurrection* will grow a *resurrection* that will lead us to a glorious immortality."

The men of Louisiana who know the colored people of that State believe that they are fit for freedom, and do not fear their extermination. I find in the same paper—the *New Orleans Times*, of the 9th instant,—an elaborate report of the proceedings of a mass meeting of colored people of New Orleans, held in Lyceum Hall, the preceding evening. I read extracts from a condensed account of the meeting taken from the columns of a leading New York journal, remarking that its statements are all sustained by the report to which I have referred:

"A meeting of the colored people of this city was held last evening in Lyceum Hall, to meet Colonel McKay, one of the commissioners appointed by the President to investigate the condition of the negroes emancipated by act of Congress, and the President's proclamation of January 1, 1868. Long before the hour of commencement every seat in the vast hall was filled, and soon the aisles and all available standing-places were densely packed above and below.

"It is no exaggeration to say that a more respectable audience, so far as external appearances were concerned, was never assembled in New Orleans. The female portion especially were as well dressed, and looked as tidy and as genteel as the audience to be found in your fashionable churches on the Sabbath. Many of the quadroons and octoroons were of surpassing beauty, and in every line of their countenance expressed intelligence, refinement, and good-breeding.

"The white gentlemen present, who had spent much time among the degraded negroes on the Sea Islands of South Carolina, were astonished to find before them an audience so fashionably dressed, so intelligent in appearance, and in every respect so thoroughly competent to understand all that should be said to them. It is also interesting to know that this Lyceum hall is in the courthouse; that it is the largest room in the city.

"The Rev. S. W. Rogers was appointed president of the meeting. The proceedings opened with prayer by a clergyman present, after which the chairman stated the object of their assembling together. He then introduced Col. McKay, the commissioner from the President.

"This gentleman on taking the stand was received with great applause. In a short address he stated to the audience that the people of the North and the President felt the deepest interest in the condition of the colored population of this city, and that the President had sent him here as a special commissioner to inquire into their condition. He had visited their schools and was very favorably impressed with the progress they were making. They must go on in the work they had commenced, and must depend in a great measure upon their own labors for their salvation.

But my time will not allow further extracts.

Gentlemen say that the bureau proposed by this bill is to be expensive to the Government; that if the system could be made lucrative, they "would love to do something for these poor blacks." The blacks do not ask you to give them anything but work and wages. They wish to pay liberally for all beyond this. These men without a name, known as, Tom, Joe, and Dick, have rented their one, five, ten, or twenty acres, and have produced a large amount of cotton, on which they pay the Government a duty of two cents per pound. I find in Mr. Yeatman's report

on the Condition of the Freedmen of the Mississippi the following statement on this subject:

"I visited quite a number of freedmen who were engaged in planting cotton on their own account.

"Luke Johnson, colored, on the Albert Richardson place, will make five bales of cotton, and corn sufficient for his family and stock, and has sold \$300 worth of vegetables. He has paid all expenses without aid from the Government. He commenced work last May.

"Bill Gibson and Phil Ford, colored, commenced work last May, and will make nine bales of cotton. They occasionally hire a woman or two, and have paid their hands in full, and found their own provisions.

"Solomon Richardson, colored, on the Sam. Richardson place, will make ten bales of cotton. He has had one hand to assist him, and has a good garden and corn.

"Richard Walton, colored, will make seven bales of cotton. He has only had assistance in gathering it. He has no garden, but has provided for himself, and paid for everything.

"Henry Johnson, colored, will make eight bales of cotton, doing all the work himself.

"Moses Wright, colored, will make five bales. He has had his wife and two women to aid him, and all have paid their own way.

"Jacob, colored, on the Blackman place, has made seven bales of very fine cotton, the best I saw, and equal to any ever grown in this section. He had some assistance.

"Jim Blue, colored, an old man, has made two bales of cotton.

"George, colored, aided by two women, has made eight bales of cotton.

"Milly, colored woman, whose husband was killed by the rebels, will make three bales of cotton. She had two boys to aid her in picking, at fifty cents per day.

"Peter, colored, and his son have made two bales, and raised a crop of corn.

"Ned, colored, will make two and a half bales of cotton, besides his corn.

"Charles, colored, will make two bales of cotton, besides his corn.

"Sancho, colored, works part of the Ballard place. I was informed he would make eighty bales of cotton. He works about twenty-seven men, women, and boys. I called to see him, but he was absent.

"Patrick, colored, on the Parron place, near Millikin's Bend, has made about twenty-seven bales of cotton. He has six or seven persons to aid him.

"Bob, colored, will make nine or ten bales of cotton on the same place.

"Prince, colored, will make six or seven bales of cotton.

Adjutant General Thomas also tells us that he had leased fifteen plantations to freedmen, and that they worked them well and judiciously, raising from four to one hundred and fifty bales of cotton, on every pound of which the Government received a rent of two cents. I hold in my hand the account of sale of part of the cotton made by a number of these poor freedmen. It is from the second report of Mr. Yeatman—that on the subject of Leasing Abandoned Plantations:

"Ample provision is made for such freedmen as desired to lease ground for themselves. Such as did it last year were eminently successful. I annex a statement of a few account sales of cotton grown by the colored lessees; the sales do not by any means include all grown by them; besides there are many others who leased plantations, or parts of plantations, for which no returns had yet been rendered.

	Bales.	Bales sold.	Netting
Samuel Howard.....	47
Edward Maxwell.....	28
Contraband	12
Twenty-two others.....	66
Silas Stephney.....	27	6	\$1,401 35
Robert Cookley.....	7	8	790 42
York Horton.....	2	2	504 84
Sapcho Lynch.....	75	29	6,897 43
Henry Harris.....	81	9	2,251 69
Sol Richardson.....	10	7	1,642 13
Luke Johnson.....	11	9	2,061 18
Richard Walker.....	5	5	1,247 60
Ben Mingo.....	14	2	580 61
William Goodin.....	4	4	1,023 94
L. White.....	28	25	5,888 60

Whole number of bales raised.....	867	101	
Net proceeds of 101 bales sold.....			\$24,289 80
Average of 276 " at \$240.....			66,240 00

377

\$90,479 80

Poor Contraband, having twelve bales of cotton as working capital, may yet hope to earn himself a "local habitation and a name."

Under General Thomas' arrangements these people were hired at seven dollars a month for an able-bodied man, and five dollars for a woman. Under the influences which originated this bill their wages have been raised to twenty-five dollars for a first-class, twenty dollars for a second-class, and fifteen dollars for a third class man, and women of the same character, instead of being compelled to labor for five dollars, now get eighteen, fourteen, and eleven dollars.

Sir, speculators, when they leased lands, said they could not work them and pay such wages; but when the lettings of hands came to be made there was

much competition for laborers at the enhanced price. On this subject Mr. Yeatman says:

There were those who stated that plantations could not be leased, if they had to pay the minimum wages required, say for men graded No. 1, twenty-five dollars; No. 2, twenty dollars; No. 3, fifteen dollars; women of the same grades, eighteen dollars, fourteen dollars, and fifteen dollars; but notwithstanding, when the time for leasing came, there were none that held back on this account."

Pecuniary advantage to ourselves is a mean argument to suggest; but let me ask whether the men of the Northwest do not wish to create millions of consumers, liberal consumers, of their great staples? I know that Pennsylvania and New England will not complain if these four million people who have been non-consumers of their products shall send each fall and spring to buy the products of their workshops. It will do the North no harm to see these freedmen and their families in houses, rather than in dog-hutches called slave-quarters; to know that they have carpets on their floors, furniture in their rooms, and Yankee clocks on their mantels; and that when on the Sabbath day they repair to the village church, built by their own generous contributions, they dress as their tastemay lead them to.

This, Mr. Speaker, is not a political bill. It is required by the exigencies of the case. We are in the midst of a revolution, and it is no answer to the demand for a bureau to say that there has never been a Freedmen's Bureau before. It is no answer to say that there is no precedent. Gentlemen, turn your vision to the front; for to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow again will come, and each day will bring new conditions and new duties; and the man who is not ready to confront the morrow is not fit to legislate for the leading nation of the world.

But gentlemen inquire whether this bill will benefit the white man. Yes, it will. I find that among the eight million whites of the South, with scarcely any foreigners among them, for foreign labor has been excluded by the system of unpaid labor that prevailed—among the eight million whites there are more than fourteen thousand more who cannot read or write than are found among the eighteen millions of the North, though these embrace almost all the uneducated foreigners who have emigrated to this country. Under the provisions of this bill, by which abandoned plantations are to be occupied, the colored man who has never owned himself and the white man who has owned nothing but himself or a few acres of mountain side or sandhill can come and rent from the Government a farm, larger or smaller as his means may justify, for which he will be required to pay two cents a pound on the cotton he may raise and five cents per bushel for corn, and so add to the revenues of the country. It will bless the poor white man quite as much as it will his dark-skinned brother, the freedman.

The bill might well be pressed as a revenue measure. Mr. Yeatman tells us that the lands leased up to February 12 will yield an income of from twelve to fifteen hundred thousand dollars per annum. But let him speak for himself:

"Under the present system all who employ labor, whether owners or lessees, are required to contribute one cent per pound on all cotton grown, which is to be applied for the maintenance and benefit of the aged and infirm freed people and motherless children, and the establishment of schools. If the quantity of land applied for should be cultivated, it will yield an income of from twelve to fifteen hundred thousand dollars per annum to be applied to the purposes above mentioned, a sum more than sufficient. Those who labor will support themselves. Schools can and will be established on every plantation leased where there are children sufficient to justify.

"The quantity of land applied for will more than employ all the laborers now under our jurisdiction, but those most conversant with the condition of things at the South say that there will be no difficulty on the score of laborers, that thousands will flock in the moment they hear that there is work for them at fair wages. They have a dread of the Freedmen's camp, in which so many have suffered and died."

And again:

"By a judicious fostering of the system of labor proposed, it will not only relieve the government of the charge of many thousands of these people whom they are now feeding and maintaining in idleness, and who must if so continued sink into a deeper state of degradation and vice than they were as slaves. With protection such as is asked for, all will find employment at fair wages, and will be able fully to support themselves, besides putting millions into the Treasury in the way of rental and tax and duties on cotton. If the number of acres as applied for are planted and the product derived from it as anticipated, a revenue of not less than eight millions may be calculated on.

But my time is almost spent. I appeal to gentlemen to let this bill pass, or better still, to aid in its passage, and for once at least give

Thanks for the privilege to bless

By word and deed

The widow in her keen distress,

The childless and the fatherless,

The hearts that bleed."